

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 10974

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US

SUBJ: SOVIET UNJAMMING OF VOA: WHY DID THEY DO IT?

1. SUMMARY. OUR PRELIMINARY VIEW ON APPARENT SOVIET CESSATION OF JAMMING OF VOA, BBC AND DEUTSCHE WELLE IS THAT IT MAY HAVE BEEN IN THE WORKS FOR SOME TIME AS GESTURE TO U.S. AND WEST EUROPEAN INTEREST IN FREER INFORMATION. IF CESSATION CONTINUES, WE WOULD JUDGE THAT SPECIFIC TIMING PROBABLY RELATED TO NEED TO OFFSET ADVERSE IMPACT ABROAD OF SAKHAROV-SOLZHENITSYN CAMPAIGN AND ALSO TO IMPENDING OPENING OF SECOND STAGE CSCE. END SUMMARY.

2. CESSATION INDICATES THAT SOVIETS ARE SERIOUSLY WORRIED THAT ACTUAL AND ANTICIPATED WESTERN BACKLASH TO DISSIDENT TRIAL AND SAKHAROV-SOLZHENITSYN ACTIVITIES POSES SERIOUS THREAT TO INDIVIDUAL ASPECTS OF BREZHNEV'S DETENTE POLICY (E.G. MFN) AND PERHAPS EVEN TO PROCESS OF DETENTE ITSELF. THEY MAY HOPE, BY A LIBERAL MOVE ON ONE ASPECT OF THEIR DOMESTIC POLICY, TO STEM WESTERN FUROR OVER OTHER ASPECTS OF IT.

3. SOVIETS ALSO UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE IN MIND THE SECOND PHASE OF CSCE BEGINNING NEXT WEEK. IN UNILATERALLY PRESENTING
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THE WEST WITH ONE OF ITS PRIMARY GOALS IN BASKET THREE,

THEY MAY HOPE (1) TO AVOID THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE CONFERENCE MAY FOUNDER OVER THE FREER MOVEMENT ISSUE AND (2) TO MAKE IT EASIER TO HOLD THE LINE ON OTHER ASPECTS OF BASKET THREE (RECENT PRESS TREATMENT OF CONFERENCE, WHICH WILL BE SUBJECT OF SEPTTEL, HAS INDICATED AN UNYIELDING SOVIET POSITION ON BASKET THREE ITEMS). FACT THAT BOTH BRITISH AND WEST GERMAN RADIONS WERE APPARENTLY UNJAMMED AS WELL LENDS SUPPORT TO THEORY THAT SOVIETS ARE ACUTELY SENSITIVE TO PROBLEMS POSED BY UPCOMING MULTILATERAL TALKS IN GENEVA.

4. ON DOMESTIC SIDE, CESSATION MAY WELL CONFIRM WHAT WE HAVE SUSPECTED ALL ALONG -- THAT JAMMING, EVEN WHERE IT WAS WORKING, HAD NOT BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL IN KEEPING WESTERN INFORMATION FROM SOVIET PUBLIC. IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE THAT SOVIET AUTHORITIES, GIVEN THEIR PARANOIA ABOUT WESTERN INFLUENCES, WOULD TAKE SO IMPORTANT A STEP IF JAMMING PER SE HAD SUCCEEDED IN CUTTING OFF SOURCES OF SUCH INFORMATION. IN FACT, WE SUSPECT THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SOME SOVIET CONSIDERATION OF STOPPING IT AT IME OF BREZHNEV VISIT. NEVERTHELESS, THE UNHINDERED ENTRY OF SOME RUSSIAN LANGUAGE WESTERN BROADCASTS -- IF IT CONTINUES -- MEANS THAT A LARGER NUMBER OF SOVIET PEOPLE WILL HAVE DIRECT ACCESS TO WESTERN SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

4. THIS NEW FACTOR, IT SEEMS TO US, IMPOSES AN OBLIGATION ON VOA TO EXERCISE UTMOST CARE IN SCREENING MATERIAL FOR TRANSMISSION IN THESE NEW CONDITIONS. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SPECULATE ON DOMESTIC PULLING AND HAULING THAT WENT INTO THE IMPORTANT SOVIET DECISION TO CEASE JAMMING. ALMOST CERTAINLY IT MUST HAVE BEEN CHECKED OUT WITH BREZHNEV HIMSELF, SO TO AT LEAST THAT EXTENT HE IS PERSONALLY ENGAGED. IT IS ALSO PROBABLE THERE ARE SOVIET CIRCLES WHO WOULD LIKE TO SEE THIS STEP FAIL AND BE REVERSED. THUS, WHILE WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT VOA SHOULD REFRAIN FROM MATERIAL WHICH MAY BE UNPALATABLE TO SOVIETS, WE WOULD POINT OUT THAT SOVIETS WILL BE MONITORING VOA WITH RENEWED

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ATTENTION AND THAT ITS FUTURE PROGRAM CONTENT COULD BECOME A FACTOR IN SOVIET POLICY DISCUSSION.
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